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INFO RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2024  
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 1543  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 0120  
RUEHNZ/AMCONSUL AUCKLAND 0645  
RUEHDN/AMCONSUL SYDNEY 1055  
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 0004  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0329  
RHHJJAA/JICPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SUVA 000184

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [CVIS](#) [FJ](#)  
SUBJECT: FIJI INTERIM AG COMPLAINT THAT USG DENIED VISA FOR  
TRANSIT TO UN VIENNA MEETING

Classified By: Amb. Dinger. Sec. 1.4 (B,D).

Interim AG goes public with UN visa-denial complaint

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[1](#)1. (U) Fiji's interim Attorney General Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum phoned Suva media from Vienna on Friday, May 9, to make public his unhappiness at Embassy Suva having denied him a visa to transit Los Angeles to and from a U.N conference in Vienna. He also complained that the U.S. denial came at "the eleventh hour." Sayed-Khaiyum said the interim government (IG) is filing a complaint with the UN in New York. We provide background.

The actual story

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[1](#)2. (SBU) Embassy Suva received a dipnote from Fiji MFA on the afternoon of Wednesday, April 30, seeking transit visas of LA for May 6 and 9/10 to facilitate Sayed-Khaiyum's attendance at a meeting in Vienna of the Expanded Pilot Review Group on the implementation of the UN Convention Against Corruption. The same afternoon, we informed EAP/ANP of the request and sought Washington's response, given that Sayed-Khaiyum is on the Fiji post-coup visa-sanction list. (Note: The USG revoked Sayed-Khaiyum's 10-year visa in early 2007, notifying him by phone and letter. Interestingly, on the transit-visa application, Sayed-Khaiyum checked the box indicating he had never had a U.S. visa revoked.) On the morning of Friday, May 2, EAP/ANP provided Washington's response to deny the visa. We immediately phoned MFA and followed up with a dipnote, delivered the same day. On Monday, May 5, Sayed-Khaiyum phoned the Embassy and had a polite conversation with DCM Mann, who confirmed the USG denial of the transit-visa request.

U.S. policy re UN-related visa requests

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[1](#)3. (SBU) To the best of our knowledge, USG policy on UN-related visas for those on the Fiji visa-sanction list is to allow an exception in those cases where travel is to New York or elsewhere in the U.S. for UN business, acknowledging a U.S. obligation under the UN headquarters agreement. Similarly, the USG has permitted travel to Washington for World Bank/IMF meetings. In Sayed-Khaiyum's case, the meeting was not in the U.S. but in Vienna; and, as he has demonstrated, he had an alternative route to get there: via Seoul.

Media coverage and reactions

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[1](#)4. (SBU) Fiji media have given Sayed-Khaiyum's public complaint reasonable coverage. Over the weekend, Embassy Suva responded to media requests for comment by noting that

USG visa sanctions on interim government ministers remain in place. We have not yet commented on the UN angle, though we did so in the past in relation to interim PM Bainimarama's attendance at the UNGA last September. From what we hear, Sayed-Khaiyum's revelation that the USG denied the visa has given heart to a number of opponents of the IG, who rightly perceive Sayed-Khaiyum to be one of the IG's most outspoken defenders of restraints on human-rights. Such restraints have included deportation of media publishers and, for some Fiji citizens, restraints on travel abroad. One blog noted over the weekend that last year the IG (Sayed-Khaiyum) refused to permit travel by a Fiji-citizen employee of the UN's Suva office to a UN conference in Tonga.

DINGER